

## 1 Samuel 24:1-7 - Thursday, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014

- Last week we left David escaping by way of the Lord delivering him from Saul yet again, this after Saul was so close in proximity to David.
- But God thwarted what could've easily been a capturing and killing of David by having Saul take his men into battle against the Philistines.
- We now pick it up in here in chapter twenty-four with David hiding in the Wilderness of En Gedi only to have Saul return to try and kill him.

(1) Now it happened, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, "Take note! David *is* in the Wilderness of En Gedi." (2) Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats.

- Notice how that right out of the shoot here in verse one we're told that Saul had returned from "following" the Philistines to pursue David.
- Interesting it doesn't say Saul had returned from "defeating" the Philistines when he returns to pursue David in the Wilderness of En Gedi.
- The point being is that God used the Philistines as a decoy of sorts in order to again save David from Saul by way of the "Rock of Escape."

- It's also interesting to note that we're not told how much time had passed before Saul would again return to his murderous pursuit of David.
- We're only told Saul has chosen his elite force of three thousand men from all of Israel, which tells me David didn't have much of a respite.
- I point this out because like Saul, our enemy continually pursues us but he'll never defeat us, as long as we're in the Rock of our En Gedi.

(3) So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there *was* a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.)

- What are the odds that Saul would end up at the exact same cave as David and his men were hiding in with all the other caves in En Gedi?
- This is clearly no coincidence rather; it's providence by the hand of God leading Saul to this cave and for a good reason as we'll soon see.
- By the way, the New King James saying Saul went in to attend to his needs, is a nice way of saying he went in so he could relieve himself.

(4) Then the men of David said to him, "This is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.' " And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a bit because there are a number of very important life lessons that we can learn from just this one verse.
- Let me first set the scene with a modern day backdrop so as to better understand how utterly profound and powerful David's response is.
- Like David, you're not only in a trial, you're in a life and death trial for quite some time, and there still does not seem to be any end in sight.

- You're basically homeless, such that you're seeking out the next cubbyhole to find some shade in, and hopefully even get some sleep in.
- You can't go home to your family, nor can your family come to you for a number of reasons not the least of which is it would not be safe.
- You still have friends, but if the truth be made known, they're all on the run too, and if that weren't bad enough, some are convicted felons.

- You've survived another night sleeping in a cave, and just as you're about to set out to find food and water, something amazing happens.
- An opportunity presents itself in such a way, that you can now be a moment away; from making all of you suffering and difficulty go away.
- You're first thought is, this must be a "God thing!" God, as He's always so faithful to do, has come through for you, and given victory to you.

- You don't even have to pray about this, it's a no-brainer, and you're friends are right there confirming it for you by quoting scripture to you.
- You've got the green light, what are you waiting for? Go for it man! This is the day, which the Lord said to you, do what seems good to you.
- You know it must be the will of God by virtue of it being in the Word of God, and you've seen the circumstances as the providence of God.

- However, why do you still have a check in your spirit? Why do you still not have the peace of God even though it seems it's the will of God?
- Might I suggest that often times the will of God may come vis-à-vis a test from God. Actually, here in lies our first life lesson from verse four.
- Namely, that of our discernment in being very careful and very prayerful because the will of God may come packaged with a test from God.

- Let me explain, it's importance to understand God may deem it fit there be a season of testing and proving for an elongated period of time.
- This because, when we're proven in those testing it builds our confidence in the Lord, which ready's and steady's us for what's ahead of us.
- Not only does it build our confidence in the Lord, so too does it build confidence in the Lord and us on the part of those who are close to us.

- This is our second life lesson from verse four; those who are the closest to us and care the most for us, may not offer the best advice to us.
- It's important to understand that sometimes their objectivity may be skewed because they're hurting for us, even going through it with us.
- While they're intentions are certainly the best, given that they want what's best for us they still have the propensity to end up misleading us.

Charles Spurgeon - "Our best friends will mislead us if we let them. In this case, with the best intentions, David's followers urged him on to murder, but grace restrained his hand."

- That brings us to a third life lesson from verse four, which is God may test us for the benefit of those close to us who watch and follow us.
- I can't even begin to imagine how David's men must have felt when he chose not to kill Saul when he clearly had the best chance to do so.
- While they may have rightfully been disappointed at the time, I would submit that they would come to understand and respect David in time.

- That is our fourth life lesson from verse four, which is that the Word of God, and the providence of God, have to be within the timing of God.
- If the timing is wrong God says slow, if the request is wrong God says no, if I'm wrong God says grow, but when they're right God says go.
- There comes a time in our lives when we simply cannot do what we want to do at the time that we want to do it. It must be in God's timing.

Many years ago I was in my En Gedi. Like David I had a situation present itself that on the surface looked like a no brainer. Had it not been for one of my favorite writers, Oswald Chamber's, and his devotional, My Utmost for His Highest, I would have cut Saul's head off instead of cutting the corner of his robe off, and in so doing, I would have brought upon myself many years of unspeakable difficulty and trouble.

Allow me to share the January 4<sup>th</sup> devotional titled, "Why Can I Not Follow You **Now**?" Chambers expounds on Peter's confusion concerning the Lord's timing when in John 13:37 he says, "Lord, why can I not follow You **now**?" He writes, "There are times when you can't understand why you cannot do what you want to do. When God brings a time of waiting, and appears to be unresponsive, don't fill it with busyness, just wait. The time of waiting may come to teach you the meaning of sanctification— to be set apart from sin and made holy— or it may come after the process of sanctification has begun to teach you what service means. Never run before God gives you His direction. If you have the slightest doubt, then He is not guiding. Whenever there is doubt— wait. At first you may see clearly what God's will is— the severance of a friendship, the breaking off of a business relationship, or something else you feel is distinctly God's will for you to do. But never act on the impulse of that feeling. If you do, you will cause difficult situations to arise, which will take years to untangle. Wait for God's timing and He will do it without any heartache or disappointment. When it is a question of the providential will of God, wait for God to move. Peter did not wait for God. He predicted in his own mind where the test would come, and it came where he did not expect it. "I will lay down my life for Your sake." Peter's statement was honest but ignorant. "Jesus answered him, ' . . . the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times' " (John 13:38). This was said with a deeper knowledge of Peter than Peter had of himself. He could not follow Jesus because he did not know himself or his own capabilities well enough. Natural devotion may be enough to attract us to Jesus, to make us feel His irresistible charm, but it will never make us disciples. Natural devotion will deny Jesus, always falling short of what it means to truly follow Him."

- This brings us to our fifth and final life lesson from verse four; God's timing is perfect and as such God is neither too late nor is He too early.
- Let me explain, consciously absent from verse four is any mention of David seeking God as to whether or not he would be king at this time.
- I'm of the belief that David was keenly aware of the timing of, and the way that, God would make him the king of Israel as Saul's successor.

- In other words, David knew it wouldn't come by his hand nor would it come in his time, rather, it would be by God's hand and in God's time.
- Furthermore, I'm also of the belief that David had the godly wisdom to know what would happen were he to take the throne in this manner.
- It would have changed the whole dynamic, in that the Israelites and even his men would have seen him as taking it instead of God giving it.

I like how one commentator said it; "David ... knew it was disobedient of him to kill Saul, because God put Saul in a position of authority and it was God's job to take care of Saul not David's. David wanted the promise to be fulfilled but he refused to try and fulfill God's promise through his own disobedience. ...David needed to seize the promise by faith [not] by the sword. ...Sometimes when we have a promise from God we think we are justified in sinning to pursue that promise. This is always wrong. God will fulfill His promises, but He will do it His way, and do it righteously. Instead, we need to be like Abraham, who obeyed God even when it seemed to be at the expense of God's promise, willing to sacrifice the son of promise (Genesis 22). Even more, we need to be like Jesus, who didn't take Satan's offer to "win back the world" at the expense of obedience (Luke 4:5-8). David was determined that when he sat on the throne of Israel it wouldn't be because he got Saul out of the way but because God got Saul out of the way. He wanted God's fingerprints on that work, not his own, and he wanted the clean conscience that comes from knowing it was God's work.

- By the way, this is precisely what the Lord has been ministering to me as of late, concerning the acquisition of our own church building.
- It's not so much that He's going to do it, it's how, when, and the way He's going to do it in the sense that it will come by faith not by force.
- Then, should the Lord tarry, we'll know it has God's fingerprints on it, and we'll have the clean conscience knowing that God is Who did it.

(5) Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's *robe*. (6) And he said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD." (7) So David restrained his servants with *these* words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on *his* way.

- This is so interesting and for a number of reasons not the least of which is that it seems to indicate that David's men would have killed Saul.
- This speaks to the heart of David's character. If you really think about it, he could've easily justified Saul's blood on another and not him.
- In other words, he could have easily thought no harm no foul as long as he himself didn't have Saul's blood on his hands, another man did.

- What's even more interesting is that David is troubled in his heart after he had cut Saul's robe as evidenced by his remorse after he does it.
- The reason I find this interesting is that David, who easily cuts off Goliath's head, regrets it when he cuts off just the corner of Saul's robe.
- This begs the question of why is it that David would become so riddled with regret and remorse? After all, at least he didn't cut off his head.

F.B. Meyer offers us insight into this, "It was a trifling matter, and yet it seemed dishonoring to God's anointed king; and as such it hurt David to have done it. We sometimes in conversation and criticism cut off a piece of a man's character, or influence for good, or standing in the esteem of others. Ought not our heart to smite us for such thoughtless conduct? Ought we not to make confession and reparation"

Charles Spurgeon of this says, "Good men tremble at doing little wrongs, where other delight in committing great crimes."

- The common denominator between Saul and Goliath is that they were both hell bent, quite literally, on killing David without blinking an eye.
- However, the difference between Saul and Goliath is Saul was the Lord's anointed, and it was forbidden to raise one's hand against him.
- Notice David doesn't say the anointed king rather, he says the Lord anointed him king, which means he'd be lifting his hand against God.

Unfortunately, some have taken verse six out of context and as such it's been the source of many problems within the church today. One commentator explains it best this way, This principle of not striking out against God's anointed leaders is good and important but sometimes has been misused. The phrase touch not the Lord's anointed is in vogue among some Christians and among many leaders. Often to them it means: "You should never speak against a pastor or a leader. He is above your criticism or rebuke, so just keep quiet." Sometimes it is used even to prevent a Biblical evaluation of teaching. But when David recognized that Saul was the LORD's anointed and refused to harm him, what David would not do is kill Saul. He did humbly confront Saul with his sin, hoping Saul would change his heart. But it is entirely wrong for people to use the idea of touch not the Lord's anointed to insulate a leader from all evaluation or accountability.

- Be that as it may this reaffirms the aforementioned principle of David taking the throne by faith and not force as he had the opportunity to.
- The point being is that if David takes the throne by force then what's to stop another from in turn also taking the throne from David by force.
- Sadly, his own son Absalom, attempted to do just that, yet true to form, David who wouldn't take it by force, doesn't try to keep it by force.

- On of the things that Pastor Chuck Smith used to say was that if you strive to gain you have to strive to maintain and such is the case here.
- David secured the throne in God's way, God's time, and for God's glory, and as such, David's throne was secured, none could take it away.
- I think of what Jesus had John write to the church of Philadelphia in Revelation chapter three about no man shutting a door that He opens.

Revelation 3:7 NIV "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

- You'll forgive my referencing the application of this to the acquisition of our own property but when God opens the door, no one can shut it.
- Moreover, if we don't strive to gain it, we won't have to strive to maintain it. This presupposes we don't opt for Ishmael, and wait for Isaac.
- Perhaps better said, it would behoove us to wait by faith for an Isaac a type of the spirit, and not force in fear an Ishmael a type of the flesh.